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## DOC 2018-02 Undergraduate Academic Certificate Programs (Revised)

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**DOC 2015-04, Undergraduate Academic Certificate Programs**

PROPOSAL TO THE ACADEMIC SENATE

TITLE: Undergraduate Academic Certificate Programs (Revised)

SUBMITTED BY: Academic Policies Committee of the Senate

DATE: December 2, 2015, Revised December, 2017, January, 2018

ACTION: Legislative Authority

REFERENCES: Art. II. B. 2.; DOC 2007-03; DOC 2014-04

APPROVED: January 19, 2018

**1 Purpose**

Senate document DOC 2007-03 entitled “Guidelines for the Development of Course-Based Graduate Certificate Programs” established University’s first Senate-approved policy for the creation and approval of certificate programs that would be acknowledged on student transcripts. The proposal of this document is intended to do the following:

- Outline guidelines and procedures for the creation and approval of academic certificate programs at the undergraduate level; and
- Align the resulting policy for the creation and approval of academic degree programs in Senate DOC 2014-04 entitled “Actions Pertaining to Degree Programs and Academic Departments.”
- In fall of 2017, the Executive Committee of the Academic Senate determined that the review process for undergraduate certificates should be examined and possibly revised. The APC was charged with this task and made revisions to the existing policy.

**2 Background**

In 2007, the University established policy relating to graduate-level certificate programs in order to formally recognize—by means of notation on the student’s official transcript and by a certificate issued by Registrar—academic accomplishment in a cluster of related graduate courses on a topic, theme, or area as defined by the appropriate faculty. These certificates were designed to be awarded in three contexts:

1. In conjunction with a graduate degree program, indicating that a specific and elective sequence of coursework has been followed *within* the requirements for a degree;
2. In addition to a graduate degree program, recognizing the successful completion of additional coursework that reflects academic accomplishment *beyond* the normal requirements for a degree; or
3. *Independent of* a degree program, designed for students who, for academic, personal, or professional reasons desire graduate level education, but do not seek a graduate degree.

Since 2007, several programs for undergraduate certificates have been developed and delivered. This has been done without a university policy governing such actions. For a more complete explication of the background regarding this policy please see Appendix A.

**3 Characteristics of Undergraduate Academic Certificate Programs**

For purposes of this policy, an undergraduate academic certificate is defined as a formal award certifying the satisfactory completion of an organized program of study at the undergraduate level. An academic certificate program is a named set of credit-bearing undergraduate courses whose successful completion by a student will be approved by an academic unit and recorded on the student's official academic transcript. As such, they may be awarded to recognize academic accomplishment in a set of related courses on a topic, theme, or area.

Undergraduate academic certificates serve the needs of both degree-seeking and non-degree-seeking students by documenting the successful completion of coursework designed to provide students with specific skills and knowledge needed for personal or professional development. It is possible, though not mandatory, that undergraduate certificates include non-credit bearing co-curricular activities as part of their requirements for completion.

Certificates may be awarded to students in conjunction with a particular degree program to explicitly note that a specific and elective sequence of coursework has been successfully completed within or in addition to degree requirements. However, certificates are available to students in any degree program and also non-degree seeking students. Overall, one purpose of certificates is to officially recognize particular skill and/or knowledge sets that students have acquired in their completion of the certificate program (see section on Title IV).

Undergraduate academic certificates are not academic degrees and generally require substantially fewer semester hours than degrees at the undergraduate level. While they may be designed to support student efforts to obtain external licensure, industry-recognized certification, or other professional credentials, certificates are intended to recognize academic achievement and not professional accomplishment.

**ADMINISTRATION:** An undergraduate certificate program may be offered by a single department or multiple departments, across academic units, across divisions, in conjunction with student development programs and other co-curricular units, or across academic institutions. Normally one individual will be designated as the certificate program coordinator in consultation with participating department chairs and unit supervisors. In addition, it is necessary that a sponsor academic unit (College or School) be identified that will coordinate the initial and continuing review of the certificate program.

**COURSE WORK:** Undergraduate certificate programs typically consist of between 9-30 semester hours of credit bearing coursework. Departures from this range should be explained in the proposal. No capstone or culminating experiences are required but may be included. Normally no more than one-third of the required course work may be graded Satisfactory/No Credit, although exceptions may be proposed.

**REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS:** All University policies pertaining to registration apply. Eligibility criteria particular to the proposed certificate program (e.g., course or degree prerequisites; ACT, SAT, scores; language or tool requirements, etc.) must be defined in the certificate program proposal and should be generally consistent with those for related degree programs as prescribed by the associated academic unit(s). Additionally, all policies for Academic Enrichment Studies apply for non-degree seeking or transient students registering for certificate programs through that office.

Non-degree-seeking students who are registered in an academic certificate programs may or may not apply their certificate course work toward an eventual degree. Exceptions should be noted in the certificate program proposal and communicated clearly to students upon admission into the certificate program.

**International Students:** International students are welcome to participate in certificate programs. International students already admitted to a degree-seeking program may add a certificate program to their course of study. If an international student wishes to pursue only a certificate program, they must maintain a full course load each semester as required by Immigration and Custom Enforcement. Students interested in pursuing only a certificate should consult with International Student & Scholar Services before embarking on their program.

**Financial Aid:** While it is anticipated that students who pursue academic certificates in conjunction with a degree would normally be eligible for financial aid as appropriate to their degree programs, the eligibility of non-degree-seeking students will likely be dependent on the particular certificate programs being pursued. Undergraduate certificate programs must be Title-IV eligible in order for non-degree-seeking students to be eligible for federal financial aid such as Pell grants and low- or deferred-interest student loans. The Office of Financial Aid must be consulted to determine the financial-aid eligibility of students enrolled in particular academic certificate programs. (See also the section on External Approvals below.)

Additionally, the Office of Financial Aid and the Registrar must be notified as undergraduate academic certificate programs are approved, amended, or eliminated. The responsibility for this reporting lies with the identified sponsor College or School.

**ACADEMIC STANDARDS:** Generally, the successful completion of an academic certificate program requires the student to achieve a grade point average (GPA) in all certificate coursework that meets or exceeds the minimum required for graduation from a degree program at the undergraduate level, with no failing grades.<sup>1</sup> Additional (either more or less) stringent criteria particular to the proposed certificate program (e.g., those which specify standards for performance in coursework, scores on comprehensive exams, or performance in capstone experiences, etc.) should be defined in the certificate program proposal.

**TIME LIMIT:** Generally, non-degree-seeking students must satisfy all requirements for an academic certificate within four calendar years from the time of first enrollment. All requirements for a certificate associated with a concurrent degree program must be satisfied within the time limit associated with that degree program.

**TRANSFER CREDIT:** Since certificates are comprised of substantially fewer credit hours than degrees, transfer credit generally will not be accepted into certificate programs completed by non-degree-seeking students except in those instances where the certificate program is cross-institutional and the transfer policy is clearly articulated between the governing institutions. In order to receive an undergraduate certificate from the University of Dayton, degree-seeking students must complete at least 50% of the program's coursework through classes offered at UD. Academic units may impose more stringent transfer credit rules, which should be identified in the program proposal.

**COMPLETION PROCESS:** At the end of each semester, the sponsor academic unit will forward the name(s) of those students who have completed all requirements to the Office of the Registrar with the request that the certificate be awarded. The Office of the Registrar will prepare the certificate(s) and note the certificate award on student transcript(s). Certificates will not be recognized at commencement.

**RECOGNITION:** Students completing a certificate program will be awarded an appropriately worded

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<sup>1</sup> At the time of this writing, **this is** a minimum GPA of 2.0 at the undergraduate level.

certificate, which will be designed and presented by the Office of the Registrar in consultation with the certificate program coordinator, consistent with relevant university policies. It minimally should contain the title of the certificate program, the sponsoring academic unit(s), and appropriate signatures. It may not contain any language or symbol stating or implying that the certificate is an academic degree or professional credential. Notation will be made on the student's transcript when a certificate is awarded.

#### **4 Academic Certificate Program Proposals**

An undergraduate certificate program may be proposed by a single department or multiple departments, across academic units, across divisions, in conjunction with student development programs and other co-curricular units (such as those affiliated with Academic Affairs and Learning Initiatives), or across academic institutions. An undergraduate academic certificate program should be consistent with the University mission and be economically feasible. The proposal to initiate such a program should be developed by those that would offer the courses and administer the program.

The proposal should address, in a narrative format kept as brief as possible, the following:

1. Rationale for the new certificate program.
  - a. Student Learning Outcomes should be clearly identified.
  - b. Description of how the proposed certificate will fulfill the Title IV Gainful Employment requirement (see Financial Aid section above).
2. Impact on other academic programs and/or departments.
3. Prospective enrollment, including non-degree seeking students.
4. Proposed curriculum – i.e. courses, sequence, unique features (if any).
  - a. Prerequisites for all required courses of the certificate should be identified.
  - b. Whether the certificate courses can also apply to degree program requirements should also be addressed.
5. Administrative arrangements including:
  - a. The sponsor academic School or College (i.e., will take responsibility for proposed and continuing academic quality)
  - b. Any collaborating division(s), unit(s) and department(s)
    - i. Collaboration includes, but is not limited to, the contribution of required and/or optional courses or experiences in the certificate program.
  - c. The certificate coordinator responsible for management of the certificate program, advising students, etc.
    - i. It should be identified whether the coordinator duty is a particular person or a position (i.e., chair of department, academic program coordinator, etc.)
6. Resource implications for faculty/staff (in all involved units), facilities, and the library.
7. Projected additional investment (if any).

In addition to the proposal, letters of endorsement or objection and documentation of consultation with all affected departments or units (where appropriate) should be included. If a proposer and co-proposer is the current administrator of an affected department or unit, such a person does not need to submit a separate letter of endorsement, as it is implied as a named proposer. The proposal must be reviewed and approved via the process detailed in section 5.

The proposal should be completed and entered in the Course Inventory Management System (<https://nextcatalog.udayton.edu/programadmin/>) as a “Certificate” and be forwarded to the Executive Committee of the Academic Senate via this workflow.

## **5 New Undergraduate Certificate Program Approval**

The process listed below is to be used for the approval of all new undergraduate academic certificate programs within the University. As noted in a later section, external approvals may also be needed.

While the College and Schools, academic departments, and other divisions may have additional and varied requirements, sequential approval is required by the following bodies:

1. Sponsor College or School
  - a. Level of review and approval should include:
    - i. Appropriate representative faculty bodies (e.g., departmental curriculum committee, unit academic affairs committee)
    - ii. Dean or division head
  - b. When more than one unit is participating in the certificate, review through one unit will be considered sufficient, provided collaborating units have indicated endorsement. This endorsement should be provided via letters of support from the dean or division head and affected department chairs as appropriate.
  - c. All consultation, review, and approval should be documented in letters of support or appendices to the proposal.
    - i. Letters of support from proposers and co-proposers do not need to be included, as their support is implied in their having proposed the certificate.
2. Executive Committee of the Academic Senate and, if the proposal has University-wide academic or educational impact, the Academic Senate. Refer to section 3.2 of Senate document DOC 2014-04 for guidelines related to the determination of whether or not a proposal has University-wide impact.
3. Provost and Provost’s Council

Unlike actions taken on new departments or degree programs, approval by the President or the Board of Trustees is generally not needed.

**EXTERNAL APPROVALS:** The Provost’s Office must be consulted to determine if external approvals will be additionally needed for a new certificate program from external agencies including the following:

Ohio Department of Higher Education. While it is anticipated that certificate programs that are comprised predominantly of coursework already delivered within existing degree programs will not require formal State approval, the Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE) requests the University to provide advance notification of all new certificate programs to (a) determine if formal review will be needed and (b) enable ODHE to note the program on the University’s Certificate of Authorization.

Higher Learning Commission. If 50% or more of the coursework (credit hours) in the certificate program are developed for the certificate program and are NOT derived from courses and academic expertise in existing certificate or degree programs, then the new academic certificate will normally require Commission approval.

US Department of Education. Special approval may be needed from the US Department of Education in order for the certificate program to be “Title IV eligible,” which means that non-degree-seeking students in the certificate program would be eligible to receive federal financial aid (e.g., Pell Grants, low- and deferred-interest student loans, etc.).

**DURATION AND REVIEW:** Certificate programs will be subject to periodic review consistent with their roles in relation to their associated degree programs at the undergraduate level. These review processes are determined at the level of the sponsoring unit (College or School). It is recommended that certificates are reviewed at least every five years.

**MODIFICATIONS TO EXISTING CERTIFICATES:** Once a certificate has been approved, the following modifications are allowed without needing to seek formal re-approval:

1. The program administrator or organization of advising for the certificate.

The following changes will require the certificate to be re-submitted, reviewed, and approved by the sponsoring unit.

1. Addition or deletion of specific courses and/or experiences from a list of possible courses and/or experiences that fulfill the certificate requirements.
2. Change in the required number of credit hours necessary to complete the certificate.
3. Removal of a component of the certificate that was a specific requirement of the initial certificate proposal.

The following changes will require the certificate to be re-submitted, reviewed, and approved by the complete process as outlined in Section 5.

1. Change in the primary sponsor (College or School) of the certificate.

## Appendix A

Although not (at this writing) common practice at the University of Dayton, this last context is consistent with how certificates are defined by both the Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE)<sup>2</sup> and the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).<sup>3</sup> According to both, a **certificate** is “a formal award certifying the satisfactory completion of an organized program of study at the postsecondary level.” IPEDS amplifies this by further defining a **program** is defined as “a combination of courses and related activities organized for the attainment of broad educational objectives as described by the institution.” These courses are presumed to be credit bearing and, as such, IPEDS reports sub-baccalaureate certificates in three categories based on the program length as follows:

- 1) Less than 1 academic year (or, equivalently, less than 30 semester credit hours);
- 2) At least 1 but less than 2 academic years (at least 30 but less than 60 semester credit hours); and
- 3) At least 2 but less than 4 academic years (at least 60 but less than 120 semester credit hours).

It is important to note that the preceding definitions do not relate certificates to degree programs and, thus, are eligible to be completed by non-degree-seeking students. In fact, ODHE amplifies its general definition of certificates by stating that “certificates should be designed as building blocks toward future degrees and with the intent of articulating the program into the next degree.” This aspect is consistent with one of the key motivators for the development of the 2007 graduate certificate policy: to utilize certificate programs to attract potential students to enroll in a set of courses that would not only enable them to advance in their fields but which might also, in turn, motivate them to complete a graduate degree as well.

Nationwide, it appears that most certificate programs reported to IPEDS--especially those awarded at community colleges and public institutions—tend to be vocationally focused. In particular, a study commissioned by the National Postsecondary Education Cooperative (NPEC)<sup>4</sup> reports that certificates “provide individuals with a means for gaining specific skills and knowledge that can be readily transferred to the workforce.” While certificate programs at UD may not have such a directly job-focused intent, it is nonetheless important to note that this aspect also has implications with respect to whether or not students enrolled in a certificate program would be eligible for federal financial assistance programs authorized under Title IV of the Higher Education Act.<sup>5</sup>

As mentioned in a preceding section, while it is not common for undergraduate students at UD to be enrolled independent of an intended degree program, there are a number of instances within which students do enroll for courses independent of a degree. These are primarily for high school students or non-matriculating students and include the following.

- The B.E.S.T. Summer program which, as defined at its UD website,<sup>6</sup> is a “special blend of academic and hands-on learning centered around business, engineering, science and technology” that provides high school students a “head start on college by taking six hours of college credit, which can be transferred to any college or university.”

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<sup>2</sup> **Guidelines and Procedures for Academic Program Review**; Appendix B: Terminology and Requirements Related to Post-Secondary Degrees, Certificates and Educator Preparation Programs

[https://www.ohiohighered.org/sites/ohiohighered.org/files/Academic-Program-Review-Guidelines\\_FINAL\\_042915.pdf](https://www.ohiohighered.org/sites/ohiohighered.org/files/Academic-Program-Review-Guidelines_FINAL_042915.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/glossary/index.asp?id=171>

<sup>4</sup> Sykes, A. (2012). Defining and Reporting Sub-baccalaureate Certificates in IPEDS (NPEC 2012-835). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Postsecondary Education Cooperative. Retrieved in August 2015 from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch>.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, the U.S. Department of Education’s Federal Student Aid Gainful Employment Operations Manual available at <http://www.ifap.ed.gov/ifap/GainfulEmploymentOperationsManual.jsp>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.udayton.edu/apply/undergraduate/hsprograms/best.php>



- The Summer Advancement Program<sup>7</sup> through which high school students can “get a taste of the college experience as [they] take regular college courses taught by University of Dayton professors” with the credits earned being transferable to any college or university while the student only has to pay for textbooks, transportation, personal expenses, and any laboratory or materials fees.
- Academic Enrichment Studies<sup>8</sup> which provides adults the flexibility to take courses of interest as a nontraditional, part-time student at a discounted rate, without dedicating themselves to a degree program. At present, this program appears to be populated primarily by transient students from other universities (such as Wright State) who which to transfer the credit to their home institutions.

Certificate programs currently offered at the University of Dayton that are specifically identified on the University’s Admissions website<sup>9</sup> are the following:

- Applied Creativity (Undergraduate, SOE)
- Catholic Education (Undergraduate, SEHS)
- Church Music (Undergraduate, CAS)
- Computational Finance (Graduate, CAS)
- Design of Experiments (Graduate, SoE)
- Early Childhood Intervention (Graduate, SEHS)
- Early Childhood Leadership & Advocacy (Graduate, SEHS)
- Financial Risk Management (Graduate, CAS)
- Geographic Information Systems (Graduate, CAS)
- Marian Studies (Graduate, IMRI)
- Non-Profit & Community Leadership (Graduate, CAS)
- Six Sigma (Graduate, SoE)
- Statistical Finance (Graduate, CAS)
- Systems Engineering (Graduate, SoE)
- Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (Undergraduate & Graduate, SEHS and CAS)
- Technology Enhanced Learning (Graduate, SEHS)
- Business Analytics (SBA post-MBA)
- Business Intelligence (SBA post-MBA)
- Cyber-Security SBA post-MBA)
- Project Management (SBA post-MBA)
- System Analysis and Design (SBA post-MBA)
- Writing Certificate (CAS)
- Dyslexia (SEHS)
- Urban Teacher (SEHS)

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.udayton.edu/apply/undergraduate/hsprograms/summer-advancement.php>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.udayton.edu/apply/pce/academic-enrichment-studies.php>

<sup>9</sup> <https://udayton.edu/academics/programs.php> [referenced in December 2017]